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Bajari Family



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ERICK



ERICK

By

LILLIAN BARBERG

ILLUSTRATED BY LAVONA KESKEY

VANTAGE PRESS

NEW YORK WASHINGTON HOLLYWOOD

FIRST EDITION

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I dedicate this book to Erick's son, Ludwig Bajari, because of his wish to remember how they lived in olden times.



FOREWORD

I wish to thank every one who has shared his story with me, especially Mae Keskey, Jemima Bajari, Florence Larson, Mrs. Anita Larson, Ann Nicholas, Mrs. Minnie Ruona, Mrs. Minnie Niemela, Mrs. Fannie Koivu, Ludwig Bajari and many others. Every story may not be exactly as it happened, but I wrote the story as two or more people related it to me.

Ludwig Bajari asked me if I would write some of the old stories down, because he felt they should be saved for posterity. The last time he was in our home before he died in 1952, he said, "Now, take paper and pencil and write what I tell you."

One time, Mr. Pulli, a Finnish historian, was here in Cokato and I happened to mention to him about the Bajari brothers' colorful life. He asked me to collect the information and give it to the Finnish Historical Society. When I began, I didn't realize it would take so long to collect the material and write it up; therefore, this material did not get into the "history." My apology for that.

I enjoyed snooping into the age in which Erick lived and I hope the future generations will enjoy this account of the way he and his relatives and neighbors lived.

LILLIAN BARBERG



CHAPTER 1

Erick Bajari looked up from his fish cleaning just as a car drove into the farmyard. He had been fishing that morning, as was his usual custom, and he had half a pail of small sunfish and crappies to clean.

Who could be coming now? The Model T Ford chugged to a stop. His daughter Minnie yelled, "Hello, Pa." The driver of the car was Hannah's son Wayne. There were two young girls in the car, too. One was Lillian Osborn, a granddaughter from Wyoming. She was Perlina's daughter. Perlina had gone with an older married sister to the Black Hills a long time ago. She had married Willie Osborn, an Englishman, and had gone to Wyoming to live. I was the other little girl.

Erick rinsed his hands in the spring and wiped them on an old piece of towel. Then he came to greet his guests. My, he was glad to see his granddaughter! Lillian's mother, who was Perlina, had died during childbirth in the Western wilderness.

Grandpa wanted to finish his fish cleaning, so Aunt Minnie took us into the house. Here we were greeted by our step-grandmother. Grandpa had married too soon after Grandmother's death—so his children thought. His sons and daughters had a little difficulty forgiving the old couple for their sudden marriage, but she was such a motherly old lady that one could not help but love her. Poor Grandpa had been so lonesome after Grandmother died, and it seemed useless to live alone when a perfectly good widow lived just up the hill. Stepgrandmother took us into the old parlor, which was seldom used, and hurried back to the kitchen to poke at the

kitchen stove and to put the kettle on to heat water for the coffee.

The old parlor was just as it had been years ago when the Erick Bajari family were all at home. The "boughten" flowered carpet on the floor, the golden-colored plush parlor set covered with crocheted coverlets, which Johanna (usually called Hannah for short) and her sisters had made, all just as they had been so long ago. The lovely lace curtains were tied back; the old reed organ, of which everyone was so proud, now stood dusty and unused in the corner. On a square table by the east window stood the kerosene Aladdin lamp. It gave such a wonderful white light that filled the whole room! A stereoscope and a box of pictures of the Alaska Gold Rush and the Chicago World's Fair were on the table beside the lamp. On a small shelf under the table was the family album with all the family photographs. There were the wedding pictures of all his children: Hilma, William, Perlina, Johanna, Anita, Levi, Eugenia, Ludwig and Jemima. There were pictures of his brothers: Peter in Sebeka; Henry, who died in a strike riot in the State of Washington; Lars and Anton, both in Holmes City; Herman in Franklin; and Abe, the youngest, who lived near his brother Peter in Sebeka.

The seven brothers had been left orphans when they were children. But because of the "grace of God" they had been able to come to America to build their homes and raise their families.

There were many other pictures in the album, too. There were pictures of his wife Sophie and of her people and friends and neighbors.

As soon as Grandpa finished his fish cleaning, he came into the kitchen.

His wife asked, "Did you sprinkle a little salt on the fish?"

"Yes, I did," he said, "And I dropped the bucket into the well pit to cure." Grandpa had a special salt box by his fish-cleaning place and the well was his refrigerator.

Because of the special guests, Grandmother served the

coffee in the dining room. While we were drinking our coffee and munching the "store" cookies, Lillian told us about each member of her family: what they were doing, and how they were getting along. She reminisced about the time her mother and her sister Florence had visited Cokato and made the trip by train. This was the only time after her marriage that P rlina had visited her parental home.

Each of us had to drink two large cups of coffee and eat more cookies to satisfy our hostess.

Grandfather suggested that maybe we'd like to go fishing. He had dug a can of worms and he found each of us a fishing pole. The lake was calm and beautiful. Wayne rowed the boat. Grandpa had a long pole anchored so it stuck up out of the water to mark his favorite fishing spot, and he'd tie his boat to this pole. Once, while dropping the anchor overboard, he fell in and had to swim to shore, pushing the boat before him. He didn't want this to happen again because rheumatism was making his joints stiff so that he couldn't swim as well as he did in his youth. We decided to try our luck at Grandpa's pole.

Erick Bajari had a very loud, clear voice. Every Saturday he would call his neighbor across the lake when the *sauna* (steam bath) was ready. Stepgrandmother was quite deaf. When Grandpa whispered to Grandmother in the kitchen, it could be heard out on the lake. Now, he was explaining to her that he was going to heat the *sauna* early because we might like a steam bath after fishing.

A good Finnish host always invited his guests for a *sauna* when they arrived from far away. Soon the water pails were clinking and clanking as the *sauna* tank was filled with soft lake water. The bathhouse was built near the lake to make it convenient to the water supply. The wood smoke began to pour out of the doorway and the only window, which was open, as the *sauna* "warmed-in."

While we fished, Aunt Minnie was scheming how to get twenty dollars from her father to help pay for Lillian's

traveling expenses. Lillian protested. She said, "I did not come to get anything from Grandfather; I came to visit Mother's old home and her people."

Auntie was firm and declared, "Pa should show his appreciation to the extent of twenty dollars for your visit." Then she said, "I know Pa is stingy, but I'll cry a little, and you will see what happens."

We didn't catch as many fish as Grandfather had, but we did catch an appetite. Grandma had fried a large platter of sunfish and crappies and boiled potatoes, which were served with onion-butter sauce. She had cut thick slices of fresh flat bread and filled a large pitcher with buttermilk.

The dining room was ready when we returned. I can't remember what the others ate, but I had twenty-one little backbones beside my plate when we stopped to survey the remains of the meal. The womenfolk helped Grandma wash and dry the dishes and put them in the proper places.

Grandpa announced that the bathhouse was hot, and he wanted to know if we would like to take a *sauna*. Wayne and Grandpa went to "take the edge off the heat"; besides, they liked it hotter than the women did. Lillian had never taken a steam bath and, of course, didn't know what to expect.

There was plenty of heat left, and all of the smoke had cleared away by the time we got into the *sauna*. Grandmother had given us towels for drying ourselves and a clean rug for the floor.

The floor was made of rough, home-sawed boards, but it had been swept clean and was white from many scrubblings. There was an odor of wood smoke and steam. The heat tingled our nostrils as we went into the steam room. We climbed up three steps and sat on the top one. The steam came around us when we threw water onto the hot stones (the *kiuvas*). We beat ourselves with oak leaves tied into small bundles about 15 inches long (*wihtas*). Perspiration poured from our pores, and we threw more cold water onto the stones for more steam. We began to feel very hot and sweaty, which indicated that it was time to get off the top step so we would

not feel weak. Quickly, we soaped ourselves and then rinsed off by pouring a bucket or two of cool water over ourselves.

It took some time for us to dry and to cool off enough to dress. When Aunt Minnie was dressed, she went to the house ahead of Lillian and me. She wanted to talk to her father alone. Lillian and I lingered by the lake and walked around the yard, looking at Grandmother's flowers and things. Wayne gave us a drink of fresh, cool spring water from the artesian well which always flowed. There was a trick to opening it so that the water would come out slow enough to fill a bucket. There was such force to it. We had never seen a well where the water came out without pumping.

Grandpa had a little trick he played on strangers who asked for a drink. He would tell them to help themselves, and when they opened the faucet, nothing would happen at first. They'd wonder what was wrong. Then the water would come with such a strong force that it would spray all over them. After his little joke, Grandpa would adjust the valve so they could fill their cup or pail.

Aunt Minnie was now talking to her father. We could hear his answers because of his loud voice. Pretty soon there was the sound of Auntie crying, and Grandfather relented. Minnie was his baby daughter and Lillian was the daughter of Perlina, whom he had lost so long ago. This was just too much for him.

Lillian was slightly embarrassed to accept this gift from her grandfather, but she thanked him politely.

It was getting late and time for us to leave. On our way to the Barbergs, Wayne asked Auntie, "Did you really cry?"

"Of course I did," she answered, "and real tears came out of my eyes, too."

CHAPTER 2

The seven Bajari brothers were born in Tervola, Finland, just below the Arctic Circle. Their father, John Sandberg, had been an officer in the Swedish Cavalry during the reign of King John VI of Sweden. This was the war between Sweden and Russia over Finland, when Sweden lost control of Finland.

After the war, John Sandberg retired from the army. He met and married a Bajari daughter from Tervola, Finland. They lived on a pension from the Swedish government in Punkka's house on the Bajari farm in the Village of Tervola.

In those days the house retained the name and whoever lived there took the name of the house. Therefore, the boys were known by various names: Punkka, Bajari, Sandberg or Johnson. The name Johnson came from their father's name, which was John.

Ten sons were born to John Sandberg and his wife. John died when the boys were still small, and they were left in their mother's care. Although three of the boys died in infancy, the mother took good care of all of them. Mrs. Bajari (Sandberg) passed away before the boys were grown to manhood.

Times were hard and food was scarce. Sometimes the people added ground tree bark to the flour and meal to make the bread and porridge stretch.

It was the custom to auction off children who were left orphans to the highest bidder to be cared for until the children were confirmed. None of the Bajari boys had been confirmed when their mother died, and consequently, were auctioned

off. One by one the boys were confirmed. They left their foster homes for Norway where they went to work on the fishing boats.

By the time Peter was confirmed, Lars, Erick, Henry and Herman were in Norway. Abe and Anton felt lonely at the thought of Peter's leaving. They did not want to be left alone, and since they were not confirmed, they decided to run away.

While walking in the below zero temperature, the boys blew on their fingers and stomped their feet to keep from freezing. Their boots were worn out and one of the boys tied his cap over one boot to keep the snow out. Peter tried to carry one of them, but he was too heavy.

Their only food was had by begging, and since it was illegal to beg outside their home community, they always tried to avoid the sheriff. It was the custom to allow travelers and poor people to come in the house at night and sleep either in or on top of the bake oven. Often the oven occupied one-fourth of the floor space in the house. It was usually heated every morning and allowed to cool down at night.

The first house the boys came to had a large bake oven. They felt the sheriff would never find them in the oven, and it was warm, too. Anton, Abe, and Peter spent the night there. They had not had such a warm place in which to sleep for a long time. But in the morning the boys discovered the sheriff had spent the night in the same house. He took Abe and Anton back with him and left Peter to continue his journey alone.

Abe and Anton went to live with an uncle. Things were not too good for the boys. Begging became the common practice; they begged not only for themselves but also for their uncle's family. The boys had a small sled on which Anton would pull Abe on their begging trips. But Anton would tire and then Abe would have to pull him instead.

Time passed. The boys grew old enough to work for their keep. Eventually they were confirmed and Anton went off to Norway. Abe decided to get married.

Abe and his wife and infant son—when the infant was sturdy enough to travel on a reindeer sled (*bulka*)—set out to join the brothers in Norway. They crossed the tundras of Lapland and arrived safely in Hammerfest, Norway. Abe found work in the fisheries with his brothers, but his son died. A second child was born, a daughter whom they named Ida.

Many people were leaving Norway to make a new life in America. Abe decided to take his family and go, too. The trip across the ocean took four weeks and their little girl became ill and died on the trip. Abe's wife said that they were the only Finnish passengers on the ship, and that it was a very lonesome voyage.

All the other Bajari boys except Anton married while they were still living in Norway. In the far north, ministers of the Gospel came around to each community about once a year. There were too few ministers for each community to have a permanent pastor; however, the state required that the ministers take care of the people's needs as best they could. On these annual visits they would perform marriages, hold services for the deceased, and baptize the infants. Then they would hold church and communion services before continuing on to the next community. Anyone who was absent from the community during the pastor's visit would have to wait until the next year for the services of the minister.

Marie Alatalo of Kittila and her first husband had missed the minister. One of their two sons died, and the father, who was a reindeer herder, was killed in a fight over some reindeer. Little Peter and his mother were left alone.

Lars Punkka (Bajari) met and married the mother of Little Peter when the minister came again. Lars never really liked Peter because he felt Peter was a foundling son of his wife's.

On the voyage across the Atlantic to America, Lars thought he would get rid of Peter. During a severe storm he tried to throw the boy into the ocean, but his wife prevented Lars from committing the crime. Little Peter grew up and

came to be known as Pete Larson, and he lived to raise a large family of his own.

Erick Bajari met Sophie Oman of the Petkajarivi household when she came to work at the fisheries in Hammerfest. They were married and their first child, Hilma, was born in Norway.

Peter Bajari married Elizabeth Dapion. Before they were married, she did Peter's laundry, and one day the lady for whom she worked scolded her for using the house soap and time for doing her fiancé's laundry. The future Mrs. Bajari was proud of her reputation and her actions. She threw back her head and said, "I will thank you to know I am using my own time and soap, too!"

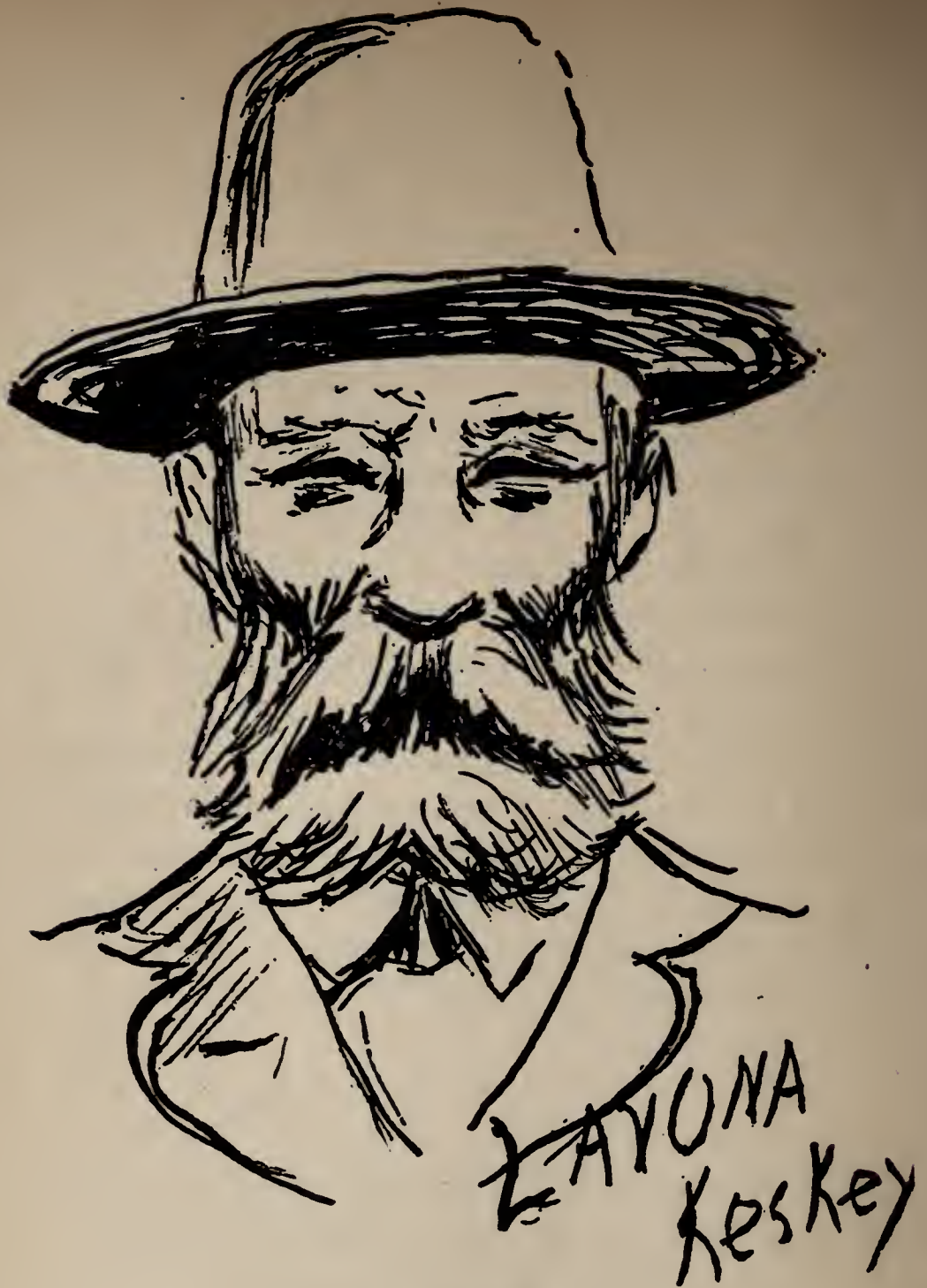
Peter and Elizabeth had six children in Norway. Peter came to America alone to earn money and to find a place to live, and then he sent for his family.

About the year 1881, agents from the Michigan copper mines came to northern Norway to recruit labor for work in the mines. Many men signed up for a year because it was a way to get to America. Several of the brothers signed up, but they did not come together. However, it was not long before they were all in America.

Anton

Anton, the only one of the Bajari brothers not yet married, made a trip back to Tervola, Finland, before coming to America. Here, he discovered their name was Sandberg, and not Punkka or Bajari.

From Tervola, Anton went to Stockholm, Sweden, where he married the daughter of a Swedish sea captain. They had two children, a boy and a girl. Anton became quite fluent in the Swedish language and made a good living for his family. He had a shoemaker's shop where he made and sold shoes. His shoes were well made and business was good. He would watch people as they walked past his shop, always looking at



ANTON

their feet to get his ideas of style and types. He made his own patterns.

His shop faced the ocean and the waves would wash over the other side of the street. For additional income he worked for the Atlantic Steamship Line as a translator and ticket agent, selling tickets to the Finnish people, always encouraging them to go to America.

His little daughter contracted some children's disease and died. Then his wife became sick with tuberculosis and died. Anton thought about going to America with his eight-year-old son, Ernest Gustav. He wrote to his brother Abe, asking about conditions in America and about the possibilities of making a living. Abe feared he might have to help his brother financially, so he wrote back and said:

“Our country strawberry
Your country blackberry
Better stay where you are.”

Anton and his young son Gust came anyway, and they enjoyed their trip on the ocean very much. Anton was fond of singing and would act as song leader, getting the other people to join in song fests.

They landed in Boston where Anton plied his shoemaker's trade. Later, they came to Calumet, Michigan, where he ran a boarding house. A lot of Irish immigrants roomed and boarded at his place. Sometimes the roomers would jump out of the second story window and escape when he tried to collect a bill for room and board. This turned Anton against the Irish.

Eventually he tired of housing and feeding the Irish, and he came to Holmes City, Minnesota, where his brother Lars lived.

After looking the community over, Anton decided he liked it, so he hired out to cut timber which was the only kind of work to be had. When he had saved the price of eighty acres, he bought a piece of land from an Irishman. Many years later we discovered that the Irishman was a Swede.

The former owner had never made a well on his property, being satisfied to carry water from the neighbor's well. A year after Anton had bought the farm, the Irishman came back for a visit. He found that Anton had built a small house and had a well on the place. He could not understand how Anton

could have prospered so much in one year on his old place.

Anton felt the need of a housekeeper. His sister-in-law Marie, who was Lars' wife, had helped Anton in various ways and had been like a mother to little Gust.

Maria had been trying to teach one of the older boys to read and little Gust had been an interested listener. Soon Gust learned the words and the other boy didn't. She taught Gust to write, too. There were no schools and if the mothers hadn't taught the children to read and write, they never would have learned.

Anton finally hired a neighbor woman to keep house for him, and later he married her. She proved to be a slovenly housekeeper. Anton's first wife had been a fine homemaker, and he couldn't put up with the second one's shiftless ways, so he divorced her. Then he decided to go to Cokato to see his brother Erick. He hoped to find a Finnish widow.

Erick Bajari and Arvid Barberg, who was Erick's son-in-law, took Anton to visit several homes where Finnish girls were employed or where the lady of the house was a widow. At one place the hired girl was lying on the floor with her head propped up with one hand, relaxing from the heavy labor of cleaning the barn, feeding, and milking the cows. Her clothes were dirty and smelled of the barn. She paid little attention to the suitor, saying, "I don't believe I am much interested in a husband." Nor were the other girls living in that house.

Then Erick took his brother to Herman Tormanen's to see Herman's daughter Mary. Mary had been separated from her husband and was living at home with her folks. Some men were building a chicken coup on the farmstead when the two men drove into the yard. Erick and Anton stated their business to Herman, and one of the carpenters overheard Erick introduce Anton to Mary and tell her that Anton was looking for a wife.

Mary said, "I cannot accept you because I have a husband, even if I don't live with him."

One of the carpenters approached another woman who had been listening to the conversation, and asked her if she would be interested in marrying Anton. She was angered by the men and said, "I will not accept any horse-trading deals."

Erick and Anton decided to leave and drove off with their horse and buggy. Anton was growing discouraged with his poor luck in finding a wife.

Kettu Matti, a peddler and promoter who traveled around the countryside, stopped overnight at the Bajaris'. He heard Anton's problem being discussed and he offered to help. He said, "If you will go with me, I'll take you to Minneapolis to see a widow woman who has a son, but let me do all the talking." Anton was quite excited at the idea. He polished his shoes, pressed his trousers, and put on a bow tie. Even his step became light as though he were walking on springs. EVERYTHING WORKED ACCORDING TO PLAN, and Anton got a wife. He brought her and her son to his new house, which had two rooms downstairs and one upstairs.

Anton was full of ambition. He felt he should have a new barn. He laid out his plans and then built a fine barn on the hillside with the hayloft on the level so that he could drive the horses and hay wagon into it. It was large enough to store all of his hay, grain and farm machinery. It truly was a fine barn; just what he had needed.

One day Anton came home to find the barn on fire. His grain, machinery, everything was going up in smoke. This was a hard blow. He suspected the Irishman who had sold him the place for setting the fire, although he was never able to prove it.

The neighbors helped Anton to get started again. The next year more bad luck came. First, rust and then a hailstorm took his crop. Anton was becoming used to hard going and hard luck.

All this time his family continued to grow. It was necessary for him to mortgage the farm and get a government loan. A hard windstorm blew down the Moe Township church, and

what was left was sold at an auction. Anton bought it all for \$100. He used what he could salvage and bought some more lumber on credit from the Hopolin and Nelson Lumber Dealers in Lowery, and he built a new barn.

A good friend of Anton's wanted to buy one of his best cows for \$100. Anton delayed completing the sale until the note at the lumberyard was due. An old man in Lowery had told the man in the lumberyard, "You'll never get your money from Anton Sandberg." The lumberyard management began threatening Anton about the loan, but Anton held tight because the note was not yet due. About this time Anton began to worry that maybe his friend would not buy the cow. The day before the note was due the cow was sold. That very evening Anton started to walk some twenty miles to Lowery to pay his debt in full. Timber wolves followed him, howling all the way, but Anton just kept on walking—wolves or no wolves. He arrived in Lowery in plenty of time—even before the lumber dealer was out of bed in the morning.

Time passed. Anton raised his large family and paid his debts in spite of all his troubles.

The old house became much too crowded, and Anton decided to build a larger house. This was quite an undertaking for Anton; he was getting along in years. The lumber was sawed from the trees in his woods, and his sons helped with the work.

Sometime after the new house was finished, Anton decided he would like to see his brothers all together once more. He wrote to each one and invited them to his house for a visit. Six of the brothers were still living—only Henry had died—and they were all getting along in years. The reunion of the Bajari brothers was a picnic in Anton's yard, and it included other relatives, too. Herman's daughter, Mrs. Hilma Linnen took some snapshots of the event. It was the last time all six brothers were together.

Anton's oldest son, Ernest Gustav, was gassed during

World War I in Germany, and he died sometime later. Gust, as he was usually called, was quite an artist. He loved to paint pictures. He also played the violin. He was a barber by trade.

Sometime after the reunion of the brothers, Anton suffered a stroke and had to be taken to the hospital. Here he wouldn't take off his underwear, which caused quite a problem for the nurses. He was in the hospital three weeks and then he was taken home. There his wife and family finally took care of him.

Even in his old age, Anton's hair was red and his spirit remained youthful. He saddened at the thought of being old and feeble. Sometimes he would jump up, clench his fists and say, *Turkkanen!* (a slang word in Finnish) through his teeth, his frail body shaking all over. He loved to talk of the olden days, and he always wished he could have accomplished a little more in his youth.

His daughter Ann lives on the old home place. She is Mrs. Melvin Nicholas. Richard, one of his younger sons, claims, "My wife's grandfather is younger than my father. I have two brothers who are no blood relation, but both are real brothers. My oldest brother was almost the age of my mother, and he was old enough to be my grandfather. We are the youngest family of the oldest family of Bajaris."

Lars

Lars, the oldest of the brothers, moved to Holme City, Minnesota, from Michigan with his wife Maria, his stepson Peter, and a daughter Josephine, who was born in Michigan. Their new home was in a dense forest, full of wild deer as well as Indians.

Lars Punkka, as he was known, traded his property in Michigan for a place in the forest in Minnesota near a lake which abounded in fish. Wild game were everywhere, providing food and pelts. Life was easy and peaceful in spite of



LARS

the fact that fields had to be cleared and his growing family cared for.

He worked in August Vinikka's log camp to earn money. First, he bought a cow; then some chickens. There were no game wardens in those days, and the Indians were always willing to trade fresh meat for bread. As his family grew, Lars added rooms to his little log house.

Later on, he sold his place and bought a sixty-acre tract where he built a new house. Here he had a twenty-acre field.

Lars was an unusually strong man. One time forty-five men had been trying to build a bridge across the creek by Fred Sackerie's lake and they were unable to swing the beams into place. Lars watched them awhile and finally, getting mad at their fumbling and weak efforts, he took the beams one by one and threw them across himself.

On the voyage to America the mast on the ship had broken during a storm. The sailors were having difficulty in raising a new mast in place. Lars took hold of the mast and raised it himself.

One day when Lars was in town, a load of kerosene barrels had been delivered to the store where he did his trading. There were six men in the store passing the time of day. They started jesting and urging Lars to lift the kerosene barrels for the merchant. They each offered to buy him a pint of whiskey if he lifted the barrels and put them where the merchant wanted them. Lars lifted the barrels, but the men refused to buy the whiskey. They said they had been joking. Lars didn't joke when he lifted the barrels, so he "cleaned up" on all six of them. The men bought Lars his whiskey.

Another time, he had been in Brandon on a day when the streets were very icy. He slipped, took a somersault, turned right-side-up, and walked on as if nothing had happened.

Peter, the stepson, and Bill, his own son, were nearly grown men when Lars decided to give the boys their first gun—a musket. While hunting, the boys came upon a party of Indians skinning muskrats and baking them in a bonfire. The Indians didn't like being disturbed in their activities and they chased the boys away, ignoring the fact that the boys had a new gun.

Lars was fond of singing, although at times it took some distilled spirits to get him started. One day, after too much "spirits," he was so ill he had to stay in bed all day. His wife and a grandson were out of doors when they heard the sound of chopping wood. When Harvey asked his grandmother who

was chopping wood, she said, "Oh, that's just Grandpa's evil spirits wandering around." They started toward the wood pile and the wood chopper disappeared. Grandmother was sure this was a sign that her husband was going to die. When they went into the house, they found Grandfather sound asleep in his bed. The grandson never did find out who or what chopped the wood.

It was harvest time and Lars had been cutting the grain with a hand reaper. Some children were running around, and while playing one of the small boys was hit accidentally on the back of his leg with the reaper. They rushed the boy to town (Alexandria) to the doctor. Dr. Mitchell with the aid of another man sewed up the wound and the boy lived. This was quite a medical feat in those days, and it was remembered for a long time.

One of Lars' daughters died of scarlet fever when she was five years old. When Lars was just past middle age, his wife died. Three and a half years later he married Heleena Risteli from Duluth. This marriage lasted ten years.

Lars remained active even in his old age. The horns on one of his cows were dangerous and he decided to cut the horns off. He had a special shears he used for this purpose. While pressing on the handle of the horn scissors, Lars died of a heart attack.

He had seven children—three girls and four boys.

He spoke fluent Norwegian which he learned in his youth when he spent a number of years in Norway.

Peter

Peter had followed Lars to Holme City from Michigan, after his family arrived from Norway. He bought a farm and lived there for ten years.

After a while, he wanted more land, so he sold out and moved farther northeast to Sebeka. There he bought a 160-acre farm. Peter and his family loaded their belongings into a wagon which was drawn by oxen, and they started on foot



PETER

for their new home. The children walked behind the wagon and drove the cattle as they went along. Their first stop was at the Angus Mattila home. They spent two and a half days on the road.

Peter had bought an old schoolhouse and had it moved to his land and converted it into a house. His 160 acres were a dense forest.

Peter and his sons cleared away the forest and stones to make fields. Then he bought an additional eighty acres which had to be cleared and cleaned. He had to enlarge his house as his family had grown. He now had fourteen children.

Peter was an excellent masseur and also an able bone setter. There were few doctors in those days and they were in widely separated communities, so the settlers were happy to have someone in their midst who could help in time of need.

Peter Bajari died at the age of seventy-five years. He was always a quiet, religious man, devoted to his family and their welfare. Two of his sons, Hjalmer and Richard, live on the home place, and an unmarried sister, Lyla, keeps house for them.

The children of Peter who were born in Norway were John, Hjalmer, Haino, Minnie, Erland and Lydia. Those who were born in America were Peter, Einard, Arnnie, Sandra, Richard, Alma and Oscar, who died in infancy.

Herman

Herman was the first of the brothers to come to Minnesota from Michigan. He lived in Cokato for five years. Then one day he decided to go to Franklin and buy a farm. He felt it was too difficult to open any large fields in this area because of the dense woods.

He walked the seventy miles to Franklin and bought 120 acres in Brandon Township in Renville County. There was no house on the land, so he built one of branches and broom grass, which grew so abundantly on the prairie.

Herman was an excellent blacksmith, and he built a shop for himself. Work was plentiful as most of the implements and tools had to be handmade. Finally he accumulated enough money to buy a factory-made reaper and with it he cut all



*Lavona
Keskey*

HERMAN

the grain for the neighbors. This enabled him to earn more money.

He built a lovely new home for his family of four sons and one daughter. His sons all died in infancy, and in 1904 his wife died. For many years there were just the two of them—Herman and his daughter Hilma. Then Hilma married a

Mr. Linen and they had two sons. One day Hilma fell into the cellar and injured her knee badly. She died of blood poisoning in August, 1930. Her husband and sons moved out West and Herman lived alone until he died at the age of eighty-four years. He had a cancer on his face.

Herman had made a casket for himself, and he was buried in it as he had wished. He had also made a tombstone for himself, and one for his daughter. He spoke three languages fluently—Norwegian, Finnish and English. He was fond of singing and loved to sing the hymns. Before he died, he said, "Now, I stop singing to this congregation and go to sing thanks to Christ, my Lord."

Herman was a wiry type of man. He loved to hike long distances, even when he was quite old. Once he rode from his home in Franklin to Cokato with Simon Selvala, who was a Watkins Medicine salesman, for a visit. They arranged a date when they would go back to Franklin. Selvala did not show up at the appointed time, and Herman had to wait. When Selvala finally showed up, Herman said to him, "If I were a younger man, I would have left without you and walked back. I've walked this distance many times."

Henry

Not much is known about Henry, as his family lived in the State of Washington, and everyone lost contact with them. He is referred to in Erick's story from time to time.

He came to America with his family from Norway, and they lived a number of years in Michigan. Then they moved to Cokato. Sometime later they moved to Holme City where Lars, Peter and Anton lived. About the time Peter moved to Sebeka, Henry heard about the good wages being paid to men working in the lumber camps in the state of Washington. So he took his family and left for the West.

We are not sure if the following tragedy occurred when they were on their way West, or if it happened when they had come to the village to buy supplies.



LAVONA
KESKEY

HENRY

The wagon was loaded and his wife and children were ready to leave when Henry decided to stop in a saloon before leaving town. They waited and waited for Henry to come back; finally, his wife got tired of waiting and asked one of the older boys to go in and hurry his father along. He went in but couldn't see his father anywhere. Then he noticed his father's cap on the floor. He happened to look out through the back door and there his father lay dead on a rubbish heap in the back yard. The lumber men were on strike and had been rioting because the lumber company had lured new men from the East to work in the lumber camps. Henry had been a "scab" in the strike and didn't know it. He was shot by one of the strikers when he entered the saloon.

Henry had been a good horse doctor. He seemed to have a way with horses that other people didn't understand. If the horses were "ornery," he would hypnotize them and then give the proper treatment. He would pull their teeth, shoe them, or take off and put on harnesses. He would just whisper in their ears and look into their eyes and the animals would do whatever he wanted them to do. Other men could not understand how Henry could take any old plug, crawl all over it and under it. They couldn't.

He was quick with his hands, too. Tricks were his pastime. A school teacher who stayed at their place came home one evening after locking the schoolhouse door, and Henry asked her if she had locked the door. She said, "Yes, here's the key." He took a ball of string from his pocket and told her to wind the string around the key. She did as he told her. Then, he asked her if she wanted the key back. She said, "Yes, I do." He then took the key from his pocket and gave it to her.

This is a part of the letter received by Ann Nicholas, Anton's daughter, from Henry's daughter Emelia in June 1960, about 65 years after her father's death, explaining what she remembered of it. For years the other relatives had no

contact with Henry's family and did not know they had changed their name from Johnson to Sandburg:

Now I'll tell you about Dad. We did a lot of traveling. He liked to be on the go. We lived in many places in Oregon and Washington, but the last few years we lived in Carbonado, a mining town near Tacoma.

Then in 1890 was the worst depression ever known. The people were starving, the mines were all closed down. Dad went to Tacoma to look for work, and there was some mine owner from Idaho signing up men to go and work for him.

So Dad signed to go with them. Before he left, he moved us to Tacoma. The mine owner never told the men that there was a strike between union and non-union men. So, when they got there, there was a war going on and the Federal troops were called in to restore order. Dad and all the men from Tacoma got right in the fight and Dad got badly hurt and was left for dead. He got home somehow and never felt well after that. Sister Mary was married and lived in Nanaimo, B.C. So she wanted the folks to come there.

The folks packed up and were ready to leave. But Dad had to go downtown to check up the baggage. He didn't return. So Mother got worried and started to look for him. She found him at the morgue. All Mother could do was unpack and rent a house and get some work to keep us fed. We got along somehow. Mother sued the mine company, but lost her case, because one of the witnesses testified falsely. He left Tacoma, Washington, and Mother never knew where he and his family went. I guess he won his case and got his money from the mining company. We lived in Tacoma for a year. Then we moved to Nanaimo, B.C. There Mother and my sisters kept a boarding house. In 1895

Mother decided to take a trip to see the folks back East. She took John and me with her. We went to Cokato to see Uncle Erick. We were there for three months. From there we went to Uncle Larson at Holme City. We were there about 3 months. Here we met and played with Minnie Ruona when she was a little girl. I met your father, Uncle Anton, at Uncle Larson's and remembered his name was Sandburg. When we got back home, I told my sisters and brothers I was going to take Sandburg for my name, so they all said they would do the same. Our name was Johnson before.

While at Larson's, who should come over but the daughters of the man who was the witness. They had bought a farm there. While there Mother married Isaac Johnson; so we had a new Dad. They bought a farm at Kent and lived there till they both passed away in 1920. Excuse my writing. I was going to rewrite it but got tired.

Love to all
Your cousin
Emelia

Abe

When Abe and his wife arrived in America, they went to live in the Michigan copper country, just as the other brothers had done. One daughter, Minnie, was born there. From Michigan, they moved to Montreal, Wisconsin, where he worked in the woods and did some mining. Three sons were born while they lived in Wisconsin.

Abe had heard about his brother Herman doing so well in Franklin with his blacksmith's shop, and so he decided to move to Franklin, too. There he bought a farm.

But Abe was not satisfied here. The country was too open and windy. Land with more woods would be better. Anna and Swan were born while the family lived at Franklin.



1235108

Lavona
Heskey

ABE

Then he moved his family to Sebeka where his brother Peter was farming. On their way to Sebeka, it was necessary to stop and rest overnight. That night, as he slept, Abe dreamed he had to go over a brush fence and on the other side of the fence was his farm with a gate, with trees, and a house. When they arrived in Sebeka, sure enough, there was

the farm he had seen in his dream. The fence, the gate, the trees, and the house were all there. He knew it was his place. He bought the farm, and he lived there the rest of his life.

Abe married twice and had twenty-two children. His second wife was quite young when he married her. She was killed in an automobile accident. One son, Arvo, was killed while serving with the Army in the Philippine Islands during World War II.

Abe Bajari felt that Sunday School was a must for the children. He never liked to see his children or the other children miss a Sunday. In winter he would load all the children into a bobsled filled with hay and robes, and off they would go with their books under their arms. Although Abe had not had any musical training, he loved music and would always lead the singing in his church and Sunday School.

Like Peter, Erick and Henry, the treating of the sick had a strong fascination for Abe. He would massage his neighbors' and friends' aching muscles and joints; he would set broken bones, let blood, and clean cataracts from their eyes with alum powder when blindness threatened.

During his youth, Abe had loved to dance, and he was light on his feet and limber of body, even unto his old age. He had always been known as "the pepper pot of the Bajari tribe."

CHAPTER 3

Erick

I

I will tell you about Erick last because I have most to say about him. From time to time, the other brothers will be mentioned as they kept in touch with each other through the years, visiting each other when possible. Each one of them had come to the Michigan copper country and from there to Minnesota, where homesteads could be had for the asking. When the homesteads were gone, land could be purchased from the railroad companies for about \$1.25 an acre.

Individual dealers charged a little more. Many land agents came to the copper country, as upper Michigan was known, to coax immigrants to buy farm land in rich and bountiful Minnesota, where "the crops grew while one slept, and the ripe apples would drop into one's mouth while lying under the trees." So the agents claimed. They were not entirely wrong; still the picture was not as rosy as they had painted it. The dense forest had to be cleared away; the stumps had to be grubbed out, and the fields made and the apple trees planted before either grain or apples could be harvested.

John Erick Bajari, known as Erick, had served his time out for the mining company in payment for his steamship fare to America for himself and his family.

Now he felt free to come to Minnesota to live on a farm of his own. There were four children in the family. He bought an eighty-acre farm on the west shore of Cokato Lake in



ERICK

Wright County, Minnesota. In this new country, a man was very fortunate to get a piece of land near a good fishing lake. It meant fish for food and a good water supply. As Erick had been a fisherman in Norway, he felt he had to have a farm near a lake.

Wright County was covered with big hardwood trees. There were great big hardwood trees everywhere. At times it would be necessary to climb to the top of an extra-tall tree to get one's bearings on distance and directions. Open spots usually were lakes, swampland or rivers.

Immigrants had been coming to this locality for about fifteen or twenty years. Finnish people settled mostly on the west side of Cokato Lake; the Swedes settled to the south where the village of Cokato was growing because of the railroad; and other nationalities settled to the east and north.

II

Erick and his wife Sophie were hard-working, thrifty people with plenty of Finnish *sisu* (guts or ego) in them. Their log cabin was comfortable and the log barn had ample room for the animals. They had cows for milk, butter and meat; a steer for pulling the farm implements; sheep for wool; chickens for eggs and eating; a pig for meat; some geese to swim in the lake; and a pair of peacocks for pets. These pets would screech and show off their beautiful feathers when strangers came into the yard. The children saved the colorful peacock feathers for a bouquet for their mother. The boys trapped and tamed wild game such as raccoons and skunks for pets; but it was Mother who really enjoyed the peacocks.

Erick had a blacksmith shop near the lake. Here he could make most of his tools, sharpen saws and plowshares, shoe the oxen and horses and do all his heavy repair work on his machinery and wagons. He made sleds and sleighs, hardened the steel for axes and skate blades. Sometime he would do work for his neighbors who were not fortunate enough to

have a blacksmith's shop or the knowledge and skill of a blacksmith.

This was not accomplished all at once. They sacrificed and waited for many things. Most things could not be purchased: first, because there was no place to buy them and secondly, because there was no money.

III

No respectable Finn could live in the wilderness very long without a *sauna*. It was a necessity and a convenience.

Erick built his *sauna* near the lake so as to be close to the water supply. He built a log building with two small rooms. The back room was the larger of the two rooms and was the heat room, and the smaller front room was used for dressing. The heat room was heated with a built-in stone stove on one side of the room which was called the *kiuvas*. There was no chimney, and all the smoke came into the room when it was heating. Wood was used for fuel. The water was heated in a tank above the stove. A platform or shelf with steps leading up to it was built across the side of the room opposite the stove. The bathers sat on the highest shelf and they threw water onto the hot stones, causing steam to rise around them. Young oak twigs, when in full leaf, were tied into small bundles and these bundles were used to whip the body to make the perspiration flow. Then came a quick soaping, if a person so desired, or just a quick rinsing with cool water, and he would be clean. Sometimes a person would repeat the steaming two or three times, depending upon the mood.

A *sauna* was more than just an outside bathhouse. It was used as a hospital room in the crowded pioneer homes. Babies were born there; colds were cured; and ills of many kinds treated. There was a saying that anyone with a sickness that could not be cured with a *sauna* and a hot *bunna* (a drink made with hot water, sugar, and brandy or whiskey), might as well die. Bones were set here, aches rubbed away, *kup-pauing* done (blood-letting or drawing of blood from places

of poor circulation where the blood clogged, causing pain). During the blood-letting, a patient sometimes fainted. The *sauna* was also the best place in the world to delouse the lumberjacks or to "sober" a drunk.

The weekly bath was never missed, and in the summer and during harvest, the *sauna* was heated several times a week. If a neighbor did not own one, he was always welcome to use yours. Out-of-town guests were always invited for a *sauna*.

The *sauna* had many other uses, too. Often, in the winter, the clothes were washed there. There was a good supply of hot water, and it was warm, and a little spilling of water did not matter. Sometimes water for the hog butchering was heated there. Of course, they had the traditional big kettle for heating water over a fireplace out-of-doors. This kettle was used for the making of soap and for boiling the clothes in the summertime. But the *sauna* was used for smoking of fish and meat; usually the fish and meat were hung from the ceiling and were cured while the bathhouse was heating. The walls and ceiling were charred black. If one was not careful while bathing, he would need an extra scrubbing to wash away the soot where he had touched the wall.

The *sauna* was really the heart of the farmyard just as the kitchen was the heart of the house. Finns always felt sorry for the "other language" people who didn't know enough to build one for themselves.

IV

One evening Erick was preparing to massage an old man in the bathhouse. It was winter and the old man had to come across the lake. Willie, the oldest son, took a lantern and went out on the ice to meet the elderly gentleman. Erick felt worried because he knew the ice was not very thick, and he watched the lantern light as it traveled farther and farther away. Suddenly, the light went down. He knew what had happened and rushed to his son. Willie had fallen through the ice where the river joined the lake. The current was quite

strong and rolled Willie over every time his father tried to pull him onto the ice. Willie gripped his father's hand and, in the dim light of the lantern, was able to crawl on top of the ice. They motioned to the old man to go back, and asked him to come another day in a boat.

V

Saturday was always a busy day in the households of the early settlers. There was always cleaning and baking to be done, and the heating of the *sauna*, with *sauna* company coming in the evening.

Every Saturday all the homemade rugs had to be hung on the clothes line to air and all the floors scrubbed. The kitchen chairs had to be scrubbed and the woodwork cleaned. In mild weather the chairs were taken out-of-doors on the grass and set in a row for one of the younger girls to scrub. The other furniture was dusted and all the windows wiped shining bright. The house plants were watered and the dead leaves and blossoms pinched off. Then the soil in the pots was loosened and the pots turned to the light, so the leaves grew all around.

The bed linen was changed, and the whole cabin put in order. Then the porch and the wooden walk were scrubbed white and left to dry in the wind.

Usually a dozen or more large, flat loaves of bread were baked, and sometimes a batch of coffee biscuits, doughnuts, or big fat sugar cookies made from sour cream. *Sauna* company was always served coffee; otherwise the "cooling off" would not be complete. There was the danger of catching a cold on the way home.

It was during this "cooling off" period and coffee-drinking time that the stories were told. While the women were in the *sauna*, the men sat around smoking, drinking coffee, and spinning yarns; sometimes tall ones, sometimes true ones. The ghost stories were the favorite ones. The children would sit around on the floor, squirming with fright, hardly daring to make their trip out before going to bed. The humor was often

dry; not a smile in the kitchen full of men, although everyone was ready to burst with laughter. Then again, the room would ring with laughter when an unusually good stunt had been pulled on someone . . . like the time when a young lad had been left home alone, and he saw a large homely face peering in at the window. The boy hooked the door and hid under the bed because he thought the devil was looking in on him. It turned out to be a new neighbor, wondering where everyone was.

Another incident was the time a neighbor named Torke Kalle had tied a Sikkanen boy to a steer's back to give him a ride. The steer bucked and ran across a field of stumps. The rope loosened, and the boy fell and his head hit a stump. He died instantly. Kalle felt bad about this, and some accused him of killing the boy deliberately. However, it was ruled an accident because he had done it in fun.

Another yarn concerns a neighbor who had been beating his oxen at the sorghum press. Little Carl, another neighbor, had gone over to see what was wrong and had looked the ox in the eye. The ox fell down because he was dizzy from the turnstile at the sorghum mill. The owner, whose name was Pramer, did not realize what had caused the ox to fall down, and he believed Little Carl had worked some magic on the animal. Pramer apologized to his ox for the maltreatment he had given it, and after the ox had rested awhile, it got up and resumed its work. Pramer believed it was because he had apologized to the ox.

There had been a murder committed in the neighborhood which caused a lot of talk and speculation.

Ole Norton had invited the neighbors to his house for a dance just before Christmas. This was nothing out of the ordinary for Ole, but the new floor he had put in his shack was out of the ordinary. All through the dance queer sounds seemed to be coming from the wall as though someone were calling for help or groaning in pain. The women decided the house was haunted and wanted to leave early. What was it that was queer about the dance? A new floor had been laid

and such queer sounds came from the wall. Where was Ole's father? They began to speculate that Ole had killed the old man as he was nowhere to be found.

Henry Bajari, being of a somewhat brave and bold nature, decided he would have a look under the new floor the next day. There were some who thought Ole had killed his father and had dropped him into the lake, but the ice on the lake was barely thick enough to walk on.

The next morning Henry rounded up some helpers, and they went to Norton's place where they tore up the new floor. Sure enough, there was the old man's body.

Ole Norton had wanted some Christmas money from his father to buy a new fiddle. His father refused to give him the money and Ole started to open his father's wooden chest where he kept his money. The father jumped on him. Ole hit his father on the chin and broke his jaw. When Ole saw that he had broken his father's jaw, he killed him and buried him under the house. Then he invited his neighbors to dance that evening in an effort to cover up his crime.

Ole was sentenced to the Stillwater State Prison for fifteen years. Finally, the neighbors got him paroled. Erick Bajari went to Cokato to celebrate the Fourth of July and he met Ole there. He recognized Bajari and shook hands with him. Ole wanted to be friends with Erick; once they had wrestled and Erick had won.

Later, Ole stole a horse from Skifstrom, the village blacksmith, and started for Minneapolis. On the way, he sold the horse. John Tracy, who was the sheriff, took after him and brought the horse back to Skifstrom, and sent Ole back to Stillwater for another four years.

When he had served his sentence, Ole returned and married a neighbor's daughter, and they went to live in Northern Minnesota.

Old country stories were numerous—like the time the hired help had gone to make hay in a far-away meadow. In the wintertime food for the haymakers was hauled by horse-

drawn sled to a cabin near the meadow. There would be *rieska* (a rye bread), jars of butter, barrels of *pima* (a cultured sour milk), and dried, smoked herring. Sometimes the workers stayed for several weeks on these trips. Often, they were enjoyable occasions for the young folk, and many a romance sprouted there.

This time the landlord had been stingy with the butter, and it didn't last the required length of time. The haymakers didn't like eating their rye bread without butter.

The foreman knew the day the landlord would come to check on the progress of the haymaking. He had a couple of the men take a dozen herring and put two ten-inch legs on each one and arrange them, one after the other, along the path to look as if they were marching homeward. When the landlord arrived, he asked the foreman, "What's the idea of the herring along the path?"

The foreman swore and said, "Is that where the herring are yet, and I sent them home this morning after some more butter."

The statisticians and speculators were always busy counting, as in the case of the three *peras* in the community: Ojanpera, Jankapera, and Lahenpera—and they were not related.

A lazy neighbor had some difficulty supporting his family, which seemed always to be in need. Everyone wondered how Levi's family kept alive. Someone is quoted as saying, "Oh, that's easy. When Levi gets hungry, he sits at the end of the table, and his wife brings him some food from the cupboard."

Then, there was the time a great forest fire was started on the Peter Wanha farm, close to Section 18, when the whole community had been threatened.

Mrs. Peter Wanha had been confined to bed in childbirth. Luntina Wanha Hoikka was born, and Mrs. Wanha was sure she and the child would perish. But, somehow the fire was brought under control and the home was saved. Luntina was the first Finnish child born in Cokato Township.

The weather was a source of many stories. One evening about five o'clock, it began to rain and it rained all night.

In the morning every place was flooded and the haycocks were floating across the lake.

Birds were numerous around the countryside, and especially near the lake where they had a supply of water and food. Spring came early that year and all the songbirds had arrived. About the middle of May a cold spell came; the wind blew and it snowed hard. A flock of birds began to fly south, right along the lake shore. There were many kinds and all colors imaginable. This continued for more than two full days with the stream of birds being three or four feet wide. They kept moving their course until at times they flew right past the corner of Erick's house.

The boys used a fish net to catch some of them. This was one of the most beautiful sights, and it never happened again.

These are a few of the stories repeated when there was *sauna* company. Then, of course, there were the everyday events, such as talk about their work, about trips to town, about company, about the new settlers, and about things and events of the household, such as births, deaths and marriages.

Religion was another favorite topic that was forever discussed. The Bible was always opened to a favorite passage or verse which was not understood. Sin was the big problem. What was sin? It seemed to be anything which was pleasant or pleasing to the eye. They had not even heard of a moral attitude. So many felt that dreariness and hard labor were the only things that were not sinful. Any advancement, or even the wearing of eye glasses and raising house plants was wrong. Women's clothes and hats were a problem. Some thought a hat of some sort might be tolerated, but a hat band was not allowed. Collars on dresses were too much! There were many who thought it was all right for the men to do things they liked, such as smoking and chewing. It's no wonder the women rebelled!

Some of the women would secretly indulge in the things they enjoyed, such as raising house plants, and then when the minister or a "believer" was expected to call, they would carry the plants and mirrors and such to the cellar.

One group was called "the Soul Buriers" because they believed the soul was buried in the grave until Judgment Day. Others claimed it was flown into the bosom of Abraham. Preachers and teachers were few. The pioneers had had very little formal education. Therefore, a great many questions were unsolved. They tried to decipher these problems of life by themselves. This led to a great deal of misunderstanding and misinformation which resulted in many heated arguments.

Often, when a number were gathered together, the religious discussions would begin. "The measuring of their minds" it was called. Often, when nothing in particular was going on, the young men would say, "Let's go to Ylijarvi's to listen to Ylijarvi and Knuti argue." Even the children would imitate them in their play. One would say, "Let's play Knuti Isko and Ylijarvi." Then one would shake his finger and his head at the others and jabber and pretend to argue, and the others would do the same.

These arguments or debates would stimulate new thought. There were no newspapers and very few young people had attended school more than a year or two. Most of them had learned to read and write Finnish at home from their parents, and a great many of them never did learn to speak English. They did all of their living in Finnish.

Hymn singing was another pastime. Whenever a couple of men or women began to gossip about someone or something, Mother would bring out the hymnals and start everyone to singing. This way they forgot their differences. Their music may not have been harmonious, but their spirits were exhilarated.

When the women had come in from the bathhouse, when they had finished their coffee and attended to their babies, they were ready to go home.

The men would light the lanterns, unhitch the horses, and the women lingered saying good-bye.

It was long after midnight.

VI

In those days, people had to create their own entertainment, and it was probably more wholesome than some forms of entertainment we have today.

Wrestling was of great interest to the menfolk. Everyone wanted to be the strongest. Great strength was needed to do the heavy work required of them; they had to do the heavy lifting as there was no machinery to do it in those days.

Erick Bajari was no shirker. He was strong, and he liked to prove it by putting the other fellow's shoulders to the ground.

A temperance organization came into being, and a temperance hall was built. There was a tendency for some of the young men to drink, and this organization was a means of combatting it. Here, the young men would have wrestling matches. Erick never went in for public wrestling, but he enjoyed the sport for the fun of it at home.

The hall was used by the young people for various types of entertainment. There were box socials, programs, and even plays sometimes, but never dancing. That was considered immoral and a sin. Games were played and lunch was served, and everyone enjoyed an evening of sociability.

The young people would enjoy the walk home, and many a "match" was made that way. People walked great distances in those days. They would walk to visit the neighbors, to attend church or they would just plain walk. No one had heard of bicycling yet. It wasn't just the young people who walked, either. Old folks walked, too. A young man who owned a horse and top buggy was looked upon with great envy.

The hanging of May baskets was popular. This was an excuse for walking some place in the lovely springtime when young folk wanted to go some place. The girls would make fancy baskets with bows and artificial flowers. They'd put in some sweets, and perhaps a pretty note, and large groups would go "hanging" May baskets. They usually headed for the houses with many pretty girls.

A basket would be hung on the doorknob very quietly, and then the "hanger" would give a loud knock on the door and run away. Whoever opened the door would find the basket and yell, "May-basket hanger!" and all the young folks would run after the "hanger." Then the "hangers" would chase the girls, and if they caught one, their reward was permission to kiss the girl. After all the "hangers" and "pursuers" were accounted for, they would go on to the next neighbor. After the basket hanging, the boys would walk the girls home. May baskets were hung all during the month of May.

In winter, skiing and skating were popular. At first, wooden skates were used as there were no steel ones. Later, steel blades were fastened on the wooden skates. Lucky was the individual who owned steel blades.

Every now and then, someone would make a *hoijakka* (a sort of ice merry-go-round). A pole was sunk into the earth so that about four feet of it was above the ice. Then a 15- or 20-foot-long pole was fastened to the top of the first pole and a sled attached to one end of this long pole. One person would sit on the sled, and the others, with skates on, would line up and push the long pole around and around. Sometimes the skaters would work up a great speed, and this was fun for both the rider and the skaters. A large number of skaters could take part in this game at one time, and everyone, of course, wanted to ride the sled.

VII

A flour mill was finally built across the lake from the Bajaris. This was a great convenience for the farmers. But when the miller had built the dam across the creek that ran out of the lake, he built it too high, and every spring the lake water backed up into the farmer's hayfield for miles around. Suckers and other fish could be caught in Ojanpera's swamp three miles from Lake Cokato.

The farmers in this area asked Mr. Cocheran, the miller,

to lower the dam during the spring floods. This he would not do because the high water gave him more power in the mill.

Erick's brother, Henry Bajari, who lived a few houses down from the lake shore, had heard that by pouring quicksilver on the dam, it would be weakened to the breaking point, because the quicksilver would eat into the logs.

Herman Bajari was in Michigan at the time, so they had him send them two pounds of mercury. They poured the quicksilver on the logs, but nothing happened. The water just kept rising and flooding the hayfields.

Then some of the farmers began digging a ditch around the dam. Cocheran objected to this, but Eskola, Sakari, Greku and Kyron Oscari kept right on digging. Eva Walima came and bawled out Cocheran for quarreling with the men. Old Torman Abo was there also. Torman Abo was an old sea captain from Norway. When he died, all of the flags in Norway were lowered to half-mast in his honor. His son John published a magazine, the *Fly Leaf*, in Minneapolis.

The miller beat up the ditch diggers, with Kyron Oscari getting the worst beating. The other men went into the lake to escape him. Old John Tracy, the constable, was called. He told Cocheran to let the men go home. However, the men said they'd be back, so Cocheran grabbed a gun. Tracy was quicker and he drew his revolver on Cocheran. Cocheran dropped his gun.

The men had suffered a bad beating and needed medical attention, Buckskin, the local medicine man, administered first aid and sent them all home.

After sixteen years of quarreling, the case was taken to court in Buffalo. Winikka was the interpreter for the witnesses, but Cocheran "bought" them off by paying each one \$2.00. Therefore, there were no witnesses.

The farmers then paid \$400 for a lawyer to come from Minneapolis and take their case. In the end, Cocheran lost the case and had to tear down the dam. The result was a ruling that no one could ever build a dam in that place again. Cocheran eventually moved away.

Erick Bajari had gone to Section 18 to get more men

to help with the ditch digging so he had missed out on the fight. Henry Bajari was in town and was sorry to have missed the fight. Old Jacob Wuollet, the local preacher, said, "It was a lucky thing that Henry was not there."

VIII

Time went on with the usual ups and downs, but ever going ahead. On the pioneer farm, life became more comfortable and a little easier. Erick decided to put up some ice one winter. He had to get sawdust from the Severi place where there was a sawmill. Eleana, his three-year-old daughter, was sitting in the wagon, waiting for her father to give her a ride. One of the horses hitched to the wagon had a young colt. It suddenly gave a nudge to the other horse, frightening her so she jumped over the fence with the wagon. Eleana was thrown out. She hit her head on a stump. It killed her instantly.

Ojanpera had put up an extra high windmill for power to saw his wood and to grind feed for the animals. Erick Bajari decided he must have one, too. So a high, strong windmill was installed. Every time the wind blew, even in stormy weather, Erick and the boys would go out to grind feed. Ojanpera had his set so it ground the feed automatically every time a little breeze came up.

Hannu had a hired man who had recently come over from Finland. He was Matt Koski, and every day he had to drive Hannu's team of horses past the Bajari farm to a rented farm where he did the field work. The Bajaris' geese would be crossing the road on their way to the lake for a swim or on their way to the barnyard for their feed every day when Matt drove past. Matt never liked the geese because they would attack the horses, and the more Matt cursed and yelled at the geese, the louder they would hiss and quack. This made driving past Bajari's farm a dreaded chore, and Matt was never able to solve the problem. He just had to bear with it.

Erick Bajari had the reputation of being quite a veterinar-

ian. He would shoe the horses, pull their teeth and trim and file the teeth that were too long; he'd trim the male pigs and the steers, not only on his own farm but for the neighbors as well. If a cow had the "tail sickness" (milk fever) and couldn't get up and would lose her milk, Erick would come and split open the end of the tail so it would bleed. Then he'd put salt or turpentine on it, and the next morning the cow would get up, and after a few days, she'd get her milk back.

Everyone claimed Erick Bajari's remedies were good, all except the high-priced veterinarian in town who did not believe in them.

Their neighbor Mr. Hannu was a conservative man. He saved wherever it was possible. Binder twine was expensive so he saved it all for the harvest. He would split birch branches for tying corn shocks and for making rail fences.

IX

It was lucky for Mr. and Mrs. Bajari that they had so many sons and daughters to help with the work. There were so many things to do. Everyone had his daytime work. The men had their work outside and the women had their work in the house, work which had to be done every day and required physical strength.

In the evenings the work was of a lighter nature and allowed for chatting and visiting. It was sort of entertainment, but everyone kept busy. The shoes were repaired; the harnesses were mended, saws filed, tools sharpened. All the small repair jobs which could be done by lamplight were left for the evening work.

The women spun yarn, knit stockings and mittens, made piece quilts, plucked feathers, patched and mended. Before they had a sewing machine, all of the clothing had to be sewed by hand. Underwear, topcoats, dresses, trousers, jackets—everything had to be sewed by hand. Sometimes a little crocheting was allowed, just for the fun of it. Every scrap

of material was saved. The old and the new pieces were saved; new pieces were made into piece quilts, and when they were too small for other use, they went into the new-carpet rags. All of the old material was made into rugs, some braided or crocheted from the better pieces of material. The more worn pieces were cut or torn into strips and woven into rugs. These rugs were not only used for floor coverings but also for extra warmth on the beds in winter, and often they were used to cover the hay in the sleigh and for lap robes.

Three or four hours each evening added much to the length of the working day. It passed pleasantly, and the work was finished so much sooner because of the busy evenings. Then, there would be a cup of coffee with a piece of lump sugar before going to bed.

X

Much of the work was seasonal. Life never became dull or burdensome. The women would adjust their work to the men's work because there were many large projects of a seasonal nature which the men were required to do at the proper time. They had to "make" wood in winter when sleighing was good for easy hauling. Enough wood had to be cut for the whole year's needs. It had to be cut a year ahead in order for it to dry properly before it was needed for fuel. The felling of the trees, making logs from the trunks for lumber, cutting off the branches, large and small, splitting rails and cutting them into proper lengths, sawing into small chunks, and finally, the chopping and splitting into usable sizes—all had to be done ahead of time.

He was a lazy farmer who didn't have a year's supply of dry kitchen stove wood ready. They used to say, "Nothing is so sad as a lazy, drunken husband, a pot with a hole in it, weeping stove wood, and crying children."

Butchering was another important job. Pork and beef for everyday use had to be salted, smoked or dried. Another important job was the making of sausage. Later on when

canning came into use, it was a luxury to have fresh meat at any time. Pork was often fried and stored in the hot fat in crocks. This would stay fresh until used. Sheep and calves being smaller, were butchered for special use during warm weather, such as for threshing or hay-making.

Fishing was usually done in the spring when the ice broke and the fish began to "rise." They would come into every stream, creek and ditch. Most people used nets to catch the fish, but others would spear them. Sometimes they had fish traps in running water. This would extend the season. Of course, they had good fishing all summer long for pleasure and for food, too.

The surplus fish would be salted and sometimes smoked for a special delicacy.

In the winter when the temperature would go below zero and the ice was the thickest, they would fill the ice-house. Horses and sleighs were used to haul the ice. They would cut the ice into cakes about two or three feet square with a large special saw. These cakes were then piled into a building and covered with a thick layer of sawdust to keep the ice from melting.

Winter itself caused the pioneers a lot of work. Just the daily routine, keeping warm and comfortable, was added work. Everything was done by hand. The chores—feeding and caring for the animals, carrying water into the house and washing and drying the clothes—were enormous tasks. Preparing and cooking all the food eaten by the family was a full-time chore. Preparing the surplus produce for market or for use during the next season meant more work.

An always time-consuming chore was caring for the milk every day. Washing all the pails and pans, skimming the milk and churning the butter was an endless job. Butter could be sold to the local store and was a source of ready cash for trading.

It seemed that the chore of churning was easier if one sang a tune or made a rhyme such as *Skurkus, skurkas kaiki turkus*; "Pitiful, pitiful, all the unnecessary." If one kept time with

the dasher, the work seemed lighter and the words expressed the feelings of the churner.

With spring came the cleaning and the planting. Everything had to be cleaned of the winter's accumulation—the house, the yard and the barns. Everything started anew. Eggs were set under the clucking hens and under the geese. Grains and cornfields were planted, as well as the gardens and the potato patch. New fields were cleared of stumps. This was an eternal chore. When one could do nothing else, he cleared stumps. They seemed to grow everywhere.

Summer brought the making of hay, the picking of berries, and the care of the young birds and animals. It also meant hoeing potatoes and cultivating corn. Berries grew abundantly everywhere: wild raspberries, choke cherries, wild strawberries, all so sweet and fragrant. They were mighty fine eating in the winter if one had the time to pick and prepare them in the summer.

Fall brought the harvest. Sometimes the neighbors would help, or they would trade work. Much of it was dramatic and fun. Often a whole neighborhood coöperated on a project such as sorghum boiling. One man couldn't afford to own a mill by himself. Everyone waited for the "sorghum boil." They learned to make play of their work, thereby forgetting the heaviness of the labor.

There was always the atmosphere of haste at harvest time. It always seemed to be hot and dusty and everything seemed to move too slowly. It took many hands to harvest the grain before a rain could come and spoil it. Cornhusking was left for winter when there was more time. The potatoes had to be dug and stored in the cellar before the frost came and spoiled them, and the pumpkins, too. Beans were stacked to dry and then they were threshed.

So it went. Life centered around the home. Everyone knew what the winter menu would be because it had been raised and gathered and stored during the summer.

The years varied in their abundance; there were failures and times when they had to do without many things. But

they took comfort, when things went wrong, in their many sayings, such as *Ahkeerus kovan onen voita*, "ambition wins over hard luck."

Each season had its "in between" work which they thought of as relaxation work. In summer it was the garden. Grandmother's garden was the envy of the neighborhood. Her vegetable garden always supplied all of their own needs. She raised onions, carrots, turnips, cabbage, tomatoes, and she always had a large patch of potatoes which supplied their needs for the whole year.

Bugs and garden enemies did not seem to bother; they just kept the dirt loose and most of the weeds down.

The Bajaris had quite a few apple trees which provided apples for sauce making and fall eating. The girls liked to make apple pies, too. Then they made jelly and canned or dried the apples for the winter use.

Grandmother planted some roses and peonies, and today great bushes of lilacs grow where she planted them on the south side of the house, close to the kitchen door. The yarrow would bloom in midsummer and one could always smell the pungent scent of caraway, the clumps of sweet William, pinks and poppies. She always collected seeds and had some "starts" for her neighbors. She had house plants, too: geraniums, a Christmas cactus, and an oleander.

XI

Grandfather kept a number of beehives for honey. This was an important item in satisfying the sweet tooth. It also provided a change in flavor from molasses. White sugar was used sparingly. Honey made good cough syrup with a little horehound or lemon, and it was good on mush and pancakes.

During threshing one fall, the water-tank man wasn't watching where he was driving, and he drove over a beehive. The bees were enraged and they stung the man and the horses. One horse became so badly infected that he died. This was a great loss to the family. They didn't have enough

money to buy another horse, and besides, there weren't any horses to be had. An ox had to be used for the farm work. Good oxen were hard to get also.

Erick borrowed a team of oxen from his neighbor Ecklund who lived across the lake. He wanted to use them to pull his new grain reaper, as his horse and one ox had not done so well. It seemed they would not pull together; when one would pull the other wouldn't. Now that he had a new reaper, he had hoped to harvest his grain in the proper manner. Matti Karjinaho and Isaac Bajala were going to help him with the work. The weather was hot and dry; too hot and dry to suit the borrowed oxen. They objected very much and caused all sorts of difficulties for the men. They wanted to go into the woods where it was cool and shady. Then they would lie down and refuse to pull; or they would stop to eat grass or wander off in the wrong direction. Dinnertime came and the men and the animals had accomplished very little. They were all hot, tired and hungry. The oxen were tied to a shade tree in the farmyard and were given hay and water. The men went into the house for their dinner.

While the men were eating, Mrs. Bajari stepped out on the porch for a breath of fresh air. She had been baking and it was so very hot in the kitchen. She noticed two queer-looking stumps in the lake. They were moving. She called to the men, and they wondered what those stumps were. Then one of the men said, "Where are the oxen?" There they were in the deep water, swimming across the lake with their yokes on. They were going home.

The men took a boat and went after the oxen, and they had quite a time getting the animals turned around and headed back toward the Bajaris' shore. Finally, when all the churning, hollering, and swishing were over and the oxen were back on dry land again, one of the men said, "Kyronaho will be awful mad at those oxen for dirtying all the fish water in the lake."

Arvid Barberg ordered a new mockingbird whistle for Jack Solmonson's new Buffalo Pitts steam threshing engine.

Alfred Abrahamson was the fireman that year, so he put the whistle on one afternoon. The next morning before daybreak he fired up the engine and when he got the full steam on, about four o'clock in the morning, he began blowing the whistle. It had a sound range from a very deep to a high, shrill foghorn. He played the horn, making a howling effect.

Old Dina Rosuu, a widow, thought the devil had got loose. She owned some cows which she prized very much and the first thing she did was go to see if anything was happening to her cows.

Later, when Pat Gidney was the fireman, he played music on the whistles. He played "Yankee Doodle," and "Red Wing" to everyone's delight. The whistle could be heard at a distance of nine miles.

A hired man had bought a new pair of black "church" boots, and he took very good care of them. He would put them on when he started for church, but he took them off when he was out of sight of the house. He carried his boots and walked barefoot until he was near the church. Then he would put them on again. He repeated this process on the way home. After he got home, he would "tar" them good and put them away for the next Sunday. One day the other hired man took the boots, ground the soles on an emery so they were quite thin, and then "tarred" them over again. The next Sunday when the owner of the boots wore them the short distance, they got holes in them. When he came home, he decided it didn't pay to save one's shoes because they got holes in them even if he didn't wear them. And he had had the boots only FIVE years!

XII

Eventually, as the Bajari family grew, the old house became too small and crowded. Erick and Sophie had prospered in the new country. The land was their own and they had money in the bank. Their family was nearly grown, and they began to have a feeling of prosperity. The large log



barn by the roadside was full of milk cows and sheep. A good team of horses had replaced the oxen. The chicken house was full of laying hens. Geese swam in the lake and peacocks would puff their feathers and make an awful racket. They owned the necessary farm machinery which was available at that time. But the old house was losing its comfortable feeling. The boys slept in the hayloft in the summer and the girls scrubbed and cleaned a room in the granary so they could have a room of their own in the summer, at least. Besides, it was cooler in the granary than it was in the house.

Thoughts of a new house began to take shape. It was to be the finest house in the countryside, with wooden siding on

the outside and room enough for everyone. There were to be nine rooms. That winter the men cut an extra lot of logs. They were sawed into lumber. The boys (Willie, Levi, and Ludwig) hauled a large pile of stones for the foundation. They were cracked and broken into the proper size and put into one large pile.

The next year they were ready to begin work on the new house. Nick Hill, who was the best carpenter in the area, was hired, and Willie and Levi were to help him. They were handy with tools and it was surprising how fast the new building took shape.

There was a large kitchen with two large windows to the south, so the sun could shine in, and they could see the straw stack in the barnyard. There was a pantry on the west side, then a dining room toward the north, and a parlor to the east with bedrooms for each, and an extra one for company. A large front porch toward the lake was trimmed with "lace" scroll edging. Here everyone liked to sit and visit in the evening and enjoy the beautiful view of the lake with the geese swimming about. Now and then a fisherman would row in sight to try his luck.

There was a large stone root cellar for the vegetables and the potatoes. There was also a nice whitewashed cellar room for the milk pans and the cream for churning. Here the apple-cider keg was kept, as well as the salt-pork crock with a large stone weight on the top. The canned meat, dried beef, smoked fish, and other similar food supplies were stored here, too. A flowing spring which was piped in and through this room kept it fresh and cool.

New furniture was purchased for the new parlor. There were a gold-colored plush couch and chairs, lace curtains for the windows, a woolen rug for the floor, and a real reed organ. There was only one other organ in the neighborhood.

One Sunday some friends came from far-away Annandale to see the new house. A neighbor girl, who had recently come from Michigan, had come with them. Her hair was blonde

and her manner pleasant. She even played hymns on the organ by reading the notes from a hymnal. The older people decided she must be a Swede because a Finn wouldn't be smart enough to play hymns by note.

Mrs. Bajari loved beautiful things. She wanted the best in furnishings, dishes, clothing, and everything. She cherished everything of beauty in the humble pioneer life.

One time a visiting minister called unexpectedly. Even though the meal was not as bountiful as she felt it should have been, she served what she had on her prettiest dishes. The table looked nice, even if the minister didn't get too well fed.

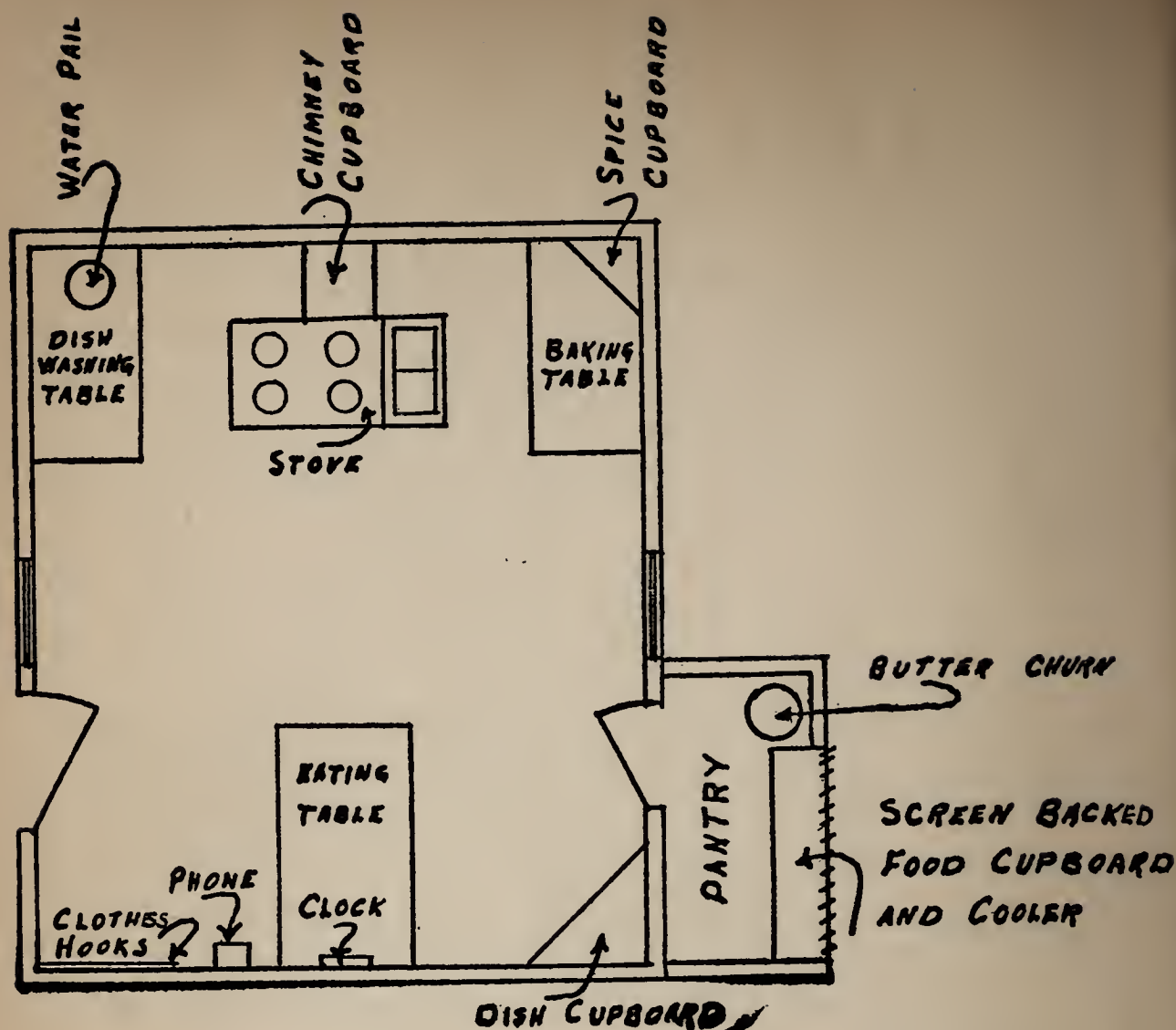
XIII

The old summer kitchen was still in use. All the youngsters and the men enjoyed moving into the summer kitchen in the spring because life was easier there. One wasn't forever being told to hang up one's clothes or to wipe one's feet. Everything was more leisurely and comfortable. Besides, the big house was cooler for sleeping and the flies did not flock into the house so bad when the cooking was done in the summer kitchen.

The old cook stove got mighty hot on baking days, so all the baking and cooking were done in the summer kitchen and the everyday meals were served there. All the dirty jobs such as feather plucking, carpet-rag work, canning, dish washing, and ironing were done there also.

During a wet spell the men would dry their clothing and boots in the summer kitchen. All of this activity saved the new kitchen for winter use. And then when company came, it was nice to take them into a cool, fresh house.

They even extended the telephone bells into the summer kitchen, in case someone called and they would not hear the bell in the house. Here is a diagram of the summer kitchen. The building was about 12' x 14'.



XIV

Some of the "boughten" foods in those days were whole tapioca for pudding and fish-eye soup, anchovies and salt herring in wooden pails, barrels of toast or *korpus*, small wooden tubs of salt salmon and trout for eating as salt fish and for making *lux lova* (an escalloped potato-with-fish dish), boxes of large soda crackers, dry yeast, sugar by the hundred pounds, white flour, porridge material, salt, coffee, some tea and spices in the richer families, and some salt-water sausage, summer sausage and cheese.

The only time they bought canned food was when a neighbor woman had a new baby and they went to see the baby. Then they had to bring *sauuna ruokkija* (bath-house

food). This term came from the fact that babies were born in bath-houses. Then the women would buy a can of peach sauce and a can of salmon, and they would bake a cake and take it all to the new baby's mother. So every time a baby was born, the family enjoyed the "boughten" canned food.

Some families ground whole rye for rye flour which was used with white flour, and some made their own wheat cereal by cleaning the wheat and toasting it in the oven, and then grinding it coarse. This cereal had a very delicious flavor when it had cooked on the back of the range for an hour or so.

Most of the food was prepared from their own produce, especially, if the housewife had imagination and ambition.

XV

Mrs. Bajari liked to keep up with the times and new advancements were always welcomed. Even though the children didn't have much formal schooling, the family took the Finnish newspaper, *Usi Kotima*, for the news, and the *Farmer* for information. From these publications she would get new recipes, homemaking hints, and she even ordered dress patterns from them. Also, the men learned better methods of doing their work.

The girls, as well as their mother, were all good at sewing. They learned to can and to preserve their home products for future use. Mail-order catalogs came out about 1900. Mother ordered plants and seeds from the seed catalogs, and the Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck catalogs were handy for other shopping. The Bajaris hustled about to earn money, and they spent it, too, when necessary. Eugenia took music lessons from the Sidel girls. There were more young people around now. Mrs. Bajari was proud of her home and her family. People began to refer to them as "the rich Bajaris," a name which hung on for many years after the children had left the parental home. Their new home came to be known as "the castle."

XVI

The first of the children to leave home was Hilma. She married Anti Carlstrom and they went west to live in the Black Hills. Perlina went to visit her sister, and then she decided to go further west to Thermopolis, Wyoming, where she met and married William Osborne, an Englishman.

1901

Whitewood, March 11th day
South Dakota

Dear and ever-remembered parents,

It's so long ago since I have written to you. Time has gone in thinking of writing. Will let you know we are all in fine health and sincerely hope the same of you. First, will thank you for your kind letter which we received the other day and were glad to hear you were all well and that you have been waiting for a letter from us.

Field land we have fifty acres or thereabout and this spring we will have five more acres broken in and we can have more field when we get time to prepare it. This farm has been neglected for a number of years but the basic soil is good and grows well if we just get some moisture. So we have to try again with new hope this spring and plant the seed into the ground. Last year we didn't get any wheat and very little anything else but hay. Now again we have to buy the seed and everything is so expensive. Now cleaned seed costs over a cent a pound and they say it's going up too. I can mention our large cattle herd. We have two full-grown cows that will freshen next month and one bull; and last fall we bought two cow calves with the money you sent. We have three horses and three pigs and sixty hens and two cats and a dog and there the story ends.

I have been wishing, if possible, for you to send a few English poplar branches. It would be nice to

have some trees around the house. Hannah promised a long time ago to send a rose branch and some flower seed and whatever you have new, if it don't cost too much to send.

(This letter was not signed but it was sent by their daughter Hilma Carlstrom in Whitewood, S. D.)

Anita went to work in Minneapolis, where she met and married Peter Larson. They went to live in his home community of Holme City, Minnesota.

Hannah, as Johanna was called, married a local boy, Isaac Arvid Barberg, who was the only son of Isaac Arvid Barberg, Sr. They lived on his home place in Section 18.

A lovely younger sister of Mrs. Matt Hasti came from Finland and caught Levi's eye. He could not rest until he had met her. That first Sunday at church, when it was time to start for home, Levi hung around the Ojanperas' buggy until he met the new Finnish girl. She had come to church with Mrs. Ojanpera, who was her aunt. Jemima Mattila had heard that Levi was just an old bachelor, always living at home with his folks, never going any place. But cupid had shot his arrow, and Levi and Jemima were married four months later.

Hannah Barberg made the wedding dress with the help of Bertha Solmonson, who lived across the road from the Barbergs. Such fun it was, making and fitting that wedding dress! Bertha had to have it fit perfectly. She would tighten the corset strings in order to achieve the hour-glass shape and have the bustle fit properly.

Eugenia and Jemima Bajari (Levi's sisters) were bridesmaids and had to have all new "boughten" clothes and fur coats costing \$100 each. They were very stylish and aristocratic. The bride had to be as nice as possible in a homemade dress and no fur coat.

Finally the wedding day arrived cold and rainy with snow flurries thrown in. The new fur coats came in handy. Levi Bajari and Jemima Mattila with their wedding party went to

the Knapp church parsonage for the wedding ceremony because there was no Finnish minister here. The sermon was read in English and the bride didn't understand a word of it. She had not learned the "other language" yet. Then they drove to Cokato to have their wedding photographs taken by Gust Aukerlund. Before they knew it, the whole day has passed.

By the time Levi and his bride arrived back home, Levi's father was quite provoked. They had forgotten to tell him where they were going. Here it was time for chores—the cows had to be milked, and the other animals fed. There was no one to do the work. Levi's father was trying to do everything alone. When Erick saw his son, he yelled. "Where have you been all day? Leaving me alone like this!" It seemed there was no end to the scolding.

Levi was so flustered, trying to consider his bride and at the same time trying to please his father, that he never noticed he still had his wedding suit on when he went out to put the geese in the shed.

In the evening there was a charivari, and when the young people began to serenade the young couple, the father ordered them away with such loud oaths of fury that the young people just disappeared.

He wasn't exactly pleased that his favorite son had married a girl from the old country. Mother intervened and took sides with her son and his bride.

Eventually Erick cooled down and decided it was time to think of retiring. He rented his farm to Levi and his wife for five years. The two families continued to live together.

1903

Whitewood March 10

South Dakota

Dear Brother Levi:

We greet you with a few lines as we seem to have the time now. We are all well at this time. First we thank you for your worthy letter. Now you have tied the knot which you cannot untie until only in death. It brings much joy, sorrow and patience. When you

have love between you, all these are won. From our hearts we wish you both luck and everything good and at least a dozen heirs. We wish to thank you for your photograph. They turned out well.

You asked what kind of a crop we had. Sort of middling. Wheat was good, but hay and corn were rather poor because it was too cold. But ours turned out pretty good because we had an early variety. We have sold twelve large pigs and received six cents a pound live weight and eight cents butchered. We still have twenty-two pigs and we have twenty head horn cattle.

Five are yet to freshen this spring and five freshened last month. All cattle are in good price here always. Newborn calves cost \$5 and \$8 and year-olds are \$15 to \$20 apiece. One could make lots of money if one had lots of milk cows. They generally bring \$60 apiece. I can also mention our baby grows fast and is well. His name is Nestor Wilbert. It would be nice if Papa and Mama would come to visit here sometimes, now that they have someone to care for the housework as you have a new house. How many rooms are there? Now they can talk about too much room. [Brother Levi and his family lived in the new house with the old Bajaris, and Mrs. Levi did the housekeeping.]

Have you heard if Anna Callin got the money we sent back to her, the money we borrowed several weeks ago. She has not written to us. Tell her to write so that our minds will be at peace. I don't know anything else this time. We just say good-bye and send our best wishes, love and regards. Greet Arvid and Hannah.

This marks your sister

Hilma Carlstrom

Write when time permits.

Eugenia married Jacob Solmonson at the Lutheran Church parsonage in Cokato. There were some wedding guests at home after the ceremony, and a meal was served.

A gallant young man with money came to visit the Bajaris

with Ludwig, when he came home from Minneapolis for a week end. He won the hand of the youngest daughter, Jemima, and they were married at home by the new Finnish pastor, Lahtinen. The next day the young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Laurie Sutinen, went on a honeymoon to Minneapolis. They made their home in the city where Laurie Sutinen was employed.

Hannah Kotila and Ludwig Bajari thought they could surprise the family. They went quietly to the new Finnish pastor at the parsonage to be married. But somehow the secret leaked out and a group of young people had gathered at Levi's place near French Lake, and they drove to the parsonage to surprise the young couple. Then they had a party for them.

Willie, the oldest son, came home from his world travels to get married and to settle down. He said that he was going to marry a woman who needed looking after, and he found his good wife Anna. She had recently come from the old country with her small daughter and she had no one to look after her. But in the end it was Anna who looked after Willie's affairs. He died at an early age and left her with a large debt on the farm which they had just bought, and with four children besides her own daughter. She was loyal to Willie, and she raised her family and paid the debt. But she never did learn to speak English.

Levi rented, and moved to, a farm in French Lake. The Barbergs rented the Bajari farm for one year, but then they went back to their own place at Eighteen Corners. Laurie and Jemima Sutinen rented the farm for sixteen months, but decided to move back to Minneapolis. Then, Willie got married and rented Grandpa's farm for two years. But then he bought his own place in French Lake and moved there. Ludwig, too, had his own place in French Lake. Not one of the children was at home now to live with their father and mother. Grandmother had suffered a stroke during the time Levi and his wife were living with them, so she was not able to work as she used to do.

By now Levi had bought his own farm in Cokato Township. Erick decided to sell his farm to Levi with the right to live on the place as long as he lived.

So, all the Bajari children left the parental home and went to live in their own homes. The lovely "castle" stood empty and useless, except for Grandpa and Grandma, in their old age.

XVII

Grandfather had always taken an interest in the organizations of the community, such as the Coöperative Creamery, the Farmers' Elevator, the Stock and Shipping Association, and the telephone company. He was eager to know what was going on and would always contribute his due share. And he never missed an election. If he didn't remember the names of the men he wanted to vote for, he would cut their picture out of the newspaper and take it with him to the town hall. There he would have the clerk help him mark his "X" in the proper square.

Black Bear Gold Mine shares were being sold around the country. Everyone was talking how rich they were going to be in a short time. Erick Bajari bought three shares at \$100 a share, and that was all. He never heard either from the mining company or of his \$300. Some of his neighbors lost considerable sums of money, but not Erick Bajari. But if it had proved to be a good thing, he would have wanted a slice of it. He believed *Kohtuus kaikesta parras*, "Moderation in all things is best."

However, with his church, it was different. He was a forceful Apostolic Lutheran, and he expected his family to follow his example—especially, the young men. He would ask, "Are you a believer?" If the answer was yes, great favor would be shown, and he would shower his blessings on them. But if the answer was no, or something evasive which meant no, then he would do his best to convert that person. He never let them go home until he felt he had converted them. Many times he scared the young people with his loud voice,

and so they usually tried to avoid the question. Grandfather was getting along in years now and he had forgotten some of the things of his youth.

The congregation voted to build a new church building. It was to be a brick building with a full basement. A carload of bricks was ordered with the Knapp Swedish church, who were building a new building, too. This meant a considerable saving for both churches. The members of the congregation volunteered to scrape the basement with teams and hand scrapers. Erick Bajari still had his team so he volunteered, too. They had to haul the bricks from town, and everyone tried to bring the largest load of bricks back to show he had the best and the strongest team. One day a farmer left his oversized load of bricks at Temperance Corners because it was getting late, and he had to go home and do chores. A hard rain-storm came up during the night. By morning the wagon wheels had sunk into the mud so deep that the horses couldn't pull the heavy load. That farmer surely heard about his *Laiskan Kuarma*, "lazy man's load."

Other neighbors hauled gravel from Jacob Peterson's gravel pit in Stockholm Township. He had donated to the church all the gravel they needed. This was a busy time for the community. It was the largest project they had ever undertaken.

The result was a beautiful building and to this day it is one of the largest church buildings in the community.

One of the neighbors had two daughters who joined the Catholic Church while working in the cities. One of them became ill and died. Her body was brought home for burial. Because there was no church of their faith in the community, the priest from the neighboring parish came to administer the last rites. Mr. Hannu had to wait until late afternoon before the priest was ready to come, and it was evening before they were ready to conduct the funeral. The horses had been standing in town all day, and this was not to Mr. Hannu's liking. The distance was close to thirty miles, and

he felt it was too far for the horses to travel without nourishment.

The neighbors who attended the services were not accustomed to the Catholic ritual, but Mr. Hannu was a respected and honored neighbor and they all felt they should share his sorrow.

One woman, being curious, went too close and inhaled some incense smoke. She had to go out because she was coughing and sputtering. Another neighbor got his vest all wet from the sprinkling of the holy water.

Erick Bajari felt it wouldn't be a decent burial without one Finnish hymn being sung at the grave, so he was going to sing. He, too, choked from phlegm in his throat, and the hymn didn't go too well. Mr. Hannu, the girl's father, was much embarrassed by his neighbors. His other daughter, who was also Catholic, exclaimed, "When I die, I'm not going to be buried from home."

Grandma declared that when she died, she wanted to have *kravijaiset* (dinner before the funeral for all the guests, and a large lunch afterward). In those days people were invited to the funeral. Sometimes a member of the family would drive with horse and buggy from house to house, asking people to come to the funeral, and those who were not invited were not expected to come.

One time when a neighbor had not been invited to a funeral, she said, "We're going to die at our house, too."

When a person was feeling poorly and feared he might die, other members of the family would say, "That's good. Then we can have some cake."

XVIII

There used to be an eccentric old figure who roamed the countryside always carrying large white bundles made from flour sacks. In these he carried all his worldly belongings. His

tin pails of Vicklodge tobacco and *piima* (a kind of sour milk made with a starter) would cling and clang as he trudged along. The pipe in his mouth would send up curlicues of smoke and would make a nice sizzling sound as he kept on sucking it for long periods of time. His ever-faithful cane helped to bolster him up under his heavy load. He always wore as many coats as he could collect from the kind housewives. All the pockets would be stuffed full of paper bags, handkerchiefs, and odds and ends of every description. He wore several scarves and caps to keep out the cold which caused his brown teeth to ache.

His bundles consisted of old, castoff clothing, home-knit stockings, patched underwear, shirts—each wrapped separately in brown wrapping paper. He had bundles of large and small bags to put things into, a bag of string for tying the bags and little bundles; he had old tobacco cans of pipe cleaners, pieces of toilet soap, old shoe laces, hunks of dried rye bread, an old cracked cup half full of rancid butter and a bag of peppermints. His shaving equipment consisted of an old mug with a slice of white soap in it and a brush and a long, straight-edged razor with a black handle. He kept the razor wrapped round and round in “silk” paper (white tissue) and then it was wrapped in brown wrapping paper and tied real tight with string. Everything was in perfect order, according to his standards, although to an outsider, it looked like a scrap heap tied together. He always carried food along with him in case he was unable to get a ride and hunger overtook him.

It always seemed that when a household was expecting a rare guest, such as a visiting minister from Finland, or *seurrass* (prayer meeting), old Charley Winikka would show up with his cheerful greeting and a compliment for the lady of the house, such as, she looked so nice, “just like a seven-bread oven.” This would make the women angry; not only because he had come when he wasn’t wanted, but also because they were not flattered by his compliments.

He would come into a house, spread his bundles all over the kitchen, rearrange his belongings, until it seemed he must be doing his spring cleaning.

If there was a woodshed or bathhouse on the place, he would be shown to one or the other with his bundles and pails.

The teen-aged boys took great delight in teasing him. Some of the boys were really mean to him, and Charley wasn't to be blamed when he'd call out in his shrill voice, *Ei sa Kallea kiusata*, "You can't tease Charley." Because Charley believed that whistling was bad, every boy would whistle when he was around. He said they were calling the devil, and he didn't want the devil around. He seemed to think that all boys were alike, and they usually acted as though they were when Charley was there.

If Charley noticed that the lady of the house owned some pretty china cups, he'd invariably ask to drink his coffee from one because he said the coffee tasted so much better from a china cup. Charley hated cats and always chased them out of the house wherever he stopped. He liked to sing hymns and would accompany himself on the organ.

Most people let him stay because they felt sorry for him; although many times he made himself too much at home to suit the women folk. They would put him to work doing all sorts of odd jobs and unpleasant work that no one else wanted to do, such as cleaning the chicken house and the outhouse, scrubbing the stairs, raking the lawn, chopping wood or whatever needed to be done. The worst of it was they would pay him only a few cents for his labor. He saved every cent for his funeral or for sick needs. Mrs. Walburi Greku was his banker.

Charley was very religious and he would go to church, bundles and all, whenever the occasion permitted, that is, whenever someone would give him a ride. He loved to tell about his life in Norway, about how he was left an orphan and about his life in an orphanage. He used to tell how they would take him by the feet and knock his head

against the wall when he had done something wrong. Then the tears would come to his eyes.

In those early days there were no institutions for the mentally retarded, and the neighborhood in which the unfortunate persons lived learned to bear with them and would support them. Sometimes, when the people in Cokato tired of Charley and he was aware of it, he would take a train and go to New York Mills or to Sebeka where there were Finnish settlements also.

XIX

Grandfather was getting quite old and very grey. He had thick grey hair which he forgot to comb most of the time, so that it lay in thick folds. He had rheumatism in his knee and it bothered him a lot. He used a cane to walk, especially outdoors.

Grandmother was unable to do the work of housekeeping. She never really recovered from the stroke. She could sit and do small tasks, but the cleaning and food preparation she left for Grandfather.

Grandfather made things handy and comfortable to suit his own needs. He cooked the foods he liked. His buttermilk crock was always ready in the pantry. Sometimes it became quite strong and sizzled a good deal when he stirred it. He would fill his pitcher and drink long draughts from a large, old coffee cup. Sometimes his grandsons would ask for a sip, "Grandpa surely had a good strong drink." His coffee was strong and salty and was served with rich cream. His oatmeal mush he must have every morning, served in his quart-sized bowl. He would fill the bowl almost full and put a good sized chunk of butter in the middle and sprinkle salt all around on the top. How could the porridge see to be eaten if it did not have an eye?

One time he complained to his son Ludwig just as he began to eat. He said that he wasn't feeling good and that

his appetite was bad. Ludwig said, "If I ate as much as you do, I'd die from overeating."

All Grandpa answered was "Huh!"

He baked his own bread and kept a good supply of summer sausage, cheese and homemade butter and a can of slightly sour Karo corn syrup for easy snacks in the pantry.

His favorite chair was at the kitchen table in front of the south window. To his left was a small cupboard with drawers in it. Here he stored his favorite tools such as his pliers, cobbler's hammer, awl, other small tools and his New Testament.

His favorite pages in the Testament were thick with dirt as he had not always remembered to wash his hands before he sat down to relax and read. The latest copy of the *Use Kotima*, a Finnish newspaper, was there also. Under the cupboard he kept his spittoon, and on the bottom shelf he had his Peerless can and his small black pipe.

If Grandfather wasn't sitting in his favorite chair when one entered the house, somehow it didn't seem right.

Grandmother, too, had her little treasure hide-outs. She kept her peppermint bag in the dresser drawer in the front bedroom. When the grandchildren or the neighbors' children came to Grandpa's house, there was always something to sweeten their mouths.

Levi's children would always take the milk to Grandpa's house. They'd all pile into the spring wagon, including the neighborhood children, for the ride to Grandpa Bajari's with the milk. Grandmother would always give a peppermint to each one of them. Sometimes, when she would have another kind of candy in her dresser drawer, she would take each one into her bedroom, one at a time, and put something into a small hand and tell the youngster, "Now, don't tell the others." Then she would take another and another until each one had made the trip into the bedroom. On the way home, first one and then another would show his gift, and it would always turn out that each child had the same kind of candy

and they had all been treated alike. The children enjoyed Grandma's little games, and they always loved to go to visit her to see what would happen the next time.

Grandmother usually took a few peppermints in her pocket to church, in case she would have to cough or get drowsy. One of the granddaughters discovered this and after that whenever she saw Grandma come into church, she'd quietly tiptoe from the old side of the church where her parents sat to the new side where Grandmother sat. Then Grandmother would put a peppermint into her hand to keep her quiet during the sermon.

Grandpa never had time to eat peppermints during the sermon. His knee bothered him and he had to use his cane more than ever. He would come tapping down the aisle and sit in his usual place, third from the front, right next to the aisle, so he would not miss a word of the sermon. At points of importance where he would agree, he'd affirm aloud, "So it is; so it is. Yes, yes, so it is," and repeat the affirmation every time it was necessary.

When one of the granddaughters was going to be married, she thought it would be nice to introduce her fiancé to Grandpa to see if he approved of her choice. A brother of the bride-to-be warned the young suitor to be sure to say yes when Grandpa asked if he is a believer or "You'll never get home from here tonight because Grandpa will feel he has to convert you."

Old Erick Bajari was very tender-hearted and was ready to apologize if he felt he had hurt someone's feelings.

He had always been a great fisherman and now that the farm work and the needs of the family did not weigh so heavily upon him, he'd take his boat out on the lake early in the morning and fish. Grandpa, sitting in his boat early in the morning, was a familiar sight on the lake.

When fishing licenses were required, Erick Bajari felt that was an unnecessary nuisance. One day when he had been cleaning fish, the game warden came to talk to him. Grandpa talked real loud in Finnish and said, "The fish don't need a

license to bite the hook." After a while, the warden left Grandpa to his fish cleaning without finding out if he had a license, but he took Grandfather's fish net.

At Christmas, the Bajaris usually went to their closest neighbor, August Hannos, for the Christmas tree. Only once do the grandchildren remember Grandfather's giving any gifts. He must have had an unusually good year that Christmas.

He always liked to have a picnic on the Fourth of July. Then all of his children would come home, bringing their families and baskets of food. There would be lots to eat and everyone would have a good visit. Sometimes there would be fireworks over the lake in the evening.

When Levi bought a new Ford touring car, it was decided to take a trip to Franklin to visit Grandpa's brother Herman. Two of Levi's boys, Clarence and Melvin, volunteered to drive. Levi and his father sat in the back seat. The road was smooth, dry, and dusty in the summer sun. Before the boys noticed it, the gas valve was pressed way down and the countryside was whizzing past with terrific speed. Grandpa was nervous; he stood up in the back seat, hooked his cane under the dashboard and tried to stop the car with a "Whoa! whoa! *Whooooo—!*" He was still driving horses.

Grandmother had another stroke and passed away. Now, Grandfather was very lonely in the big house which had been the pride of the family, but which now was in need of repair and paint. An old, musty odor hung in the air as no one really kept house any more. Once or twice a year the granddaughters would come and give the house a good scrubbing, but there had been no painting done since the younger ones had lived there. It had been painted then, and Grandpa felt it should last a lifetime.

Grandmother had been a good companion even though she was something of an invalid. Now that she was gone, he was alone. For seven long weeks he had mourned her passing. He couldn't stand it any longer. He quickly courted and married his next-door neighbor who was a widow. He had known Mrs. Kovala many years. He had known her husband and

family. They had been neighbors a long time. They were married in the old parlor.

Grandpa's wedding was something unusual. During the ceremony, when the minister asked Erick if he would take this woman to be his wedded wife, Erick was shocked. He had not thought of that part of the ceremony and he hardly knew what to say. Finally, he stammered "Yes, yes," and when the minister asked if he would love her for better or for worse, he answered in disgust, "Why, of course." Then Grandpa couldn't find the ring and everyone helped in the search through all the pockets, drawers, and all the places where Grandpa could have put it. When the minister was praying, old Erick started to cry and stammered something about hoping the days would end soon. Even the minister had to smile, and the guests laughed right out. Poor Grandpa was not sure whether he had gone through a marriage or a funeral ceremony. As soon as the ceremony was over, Grandpa decided to look for the old chicken-feed pail. He said it was time to feed the chickens.

His new wife kept house for him for nine years. They were happy, quiet years for the elderly couple.

At eighty-four years of age, Grandfather suffered a stroke and passed away. All of his children and their relatives and friends came to his funeral. It was one of the grandest funerals there had ever been at the new Finnish church.

They would all miss Grandpa Bajari, and so would his second wife, who had gone with him on his early morning fishing trips. She went back to her old home to live with her daughter, and eighteen months later she passed on. Grandpa had provided for the payment of her funeral expenses.

THE SEVEN BAJARI BROTHERS

Lars Olaf Johnson Bajari. Born 1840, Tervolassa. Came to America from Norway in 1871, to the Michigan copper country. Then to Holme City, Minnesota, in 1876. Wife Marie Alatalo. Born 1841, Kittilassaa. Died May 3, 1914. Second wife Heleena Ristili. Born 1855. Married 1916. Lars died in October, 1925.

John Erick Bajari. Born December 1845, Tervolassa. Came to America from Norway 1871, to Michigan copper country. Came to Cokato 1876. Wife Sofia Ulriika Oman of the Pitkajarvi house. Born January 5, 1846, Karunkissa.

Peter William Bajari.* Born May 1851, Tervolassa. Died November, 1926. Married Elizabeth Dapion, 1881. Came to America 1890, to Holme City, Minnesota. Moved to Sebeka 1901. Died 1931.

Herman Johnson. Born October 9, 1854. Came to America 1872, to Michigan copper country. Then to Cokato, Minnesota. Walked to Franklin in 1879. Wife Kruta Karolina Matti. Born 1850, Tervolassa. Died 1907. Five children.

Henrik Bajari. Born 1845, Tervolassa. Came to America 1870. Lived in Cokato and Holme City, Minnesota. Then in Washington State. Died 1888.

6. Anton Sandberg. Born 1858, Tervolassa. Died in 1943.

7. Abraham Bajari.* Born May 15, 1860, Tervolassa. His mother died when he was little more than a year old. Married Maria Gustaava Mikko November 26th, 1880. She was

*(AUTHOR'S NOTE: The spelling *Pajari* was adopted by the families of Peter and Abraham.)

born February 9, 1861, Tervolassa. They went to Norway in 1881. Came to America in 1882 to Michigan copper country. In 1893, they moved to Franklin, Minnesota and then to Sebeka in 1899. First wife died February 16, 1908, in Sebeka. Married Hilja Katarüna Vüitalan. She died July 27, 1933. Abraham died May 11, 1943.

